United Nations

Press Release

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- In two separate resolutions, Security Council calls upon States to take all measures necessary to facilitate delivery of humanitarian assistance to Sarajevo and "wherever needed in other parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina"; strongly condems any violations of international humanitarian law and demands that International Committee of Red Cross be granted "immediate, unimpeded and continued access to camps, prisons and detention centres" within the territory of the former Yugoslavia; says it will take further measures under United Nations Charter if parties fail to comply with provisions of the resolution.

- United States calls on the Human Rights Commission, meeting in Extraordinary Session in Geneva, to appoint Special Rapporteur to conduct an urgent, first-hand investigation into allegations of human rights violations in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees dispatches humanitarian convoy to northern Bosnian town of Banja Luka to assist 28,000 people threatened with "ethnic cleansing".

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Under the first resolution 770 (1992), adopted by 12 votes in favour and three abstentions (China, India and Zimbabwe), the Council called upon States to take all measures necessary to facilitate, in coordination with the United Nations, the delivery of humanitarian assistance to Sarajevo and "wherever needed in other parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina".

The Council further called upon States to report to the Secretary-General on measures they are taking to carry out this resolution, and asked the Secretary-General to report to the Council on the implementation of the resolution.

(more)

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Under the second resolution 771 (1992), adopted unanimously, the Council demanded that the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and other relevant humanitarian organizations be granted "immediate, unimpeded and continued access to all camps, prisons and detention centres within the territory of the former Yugoslavia". It strongly condemned any violations of international humanitarian law, including those involved in the practice of "ethnic cleansing" and called upon States and international humanitarian organizations "to collate substantiated information in their possession or submitted to them" relating to the violations of humanitarian law, including grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions, being committed in the territory of the former Yugoslavia" and to make this information available to the Council.

The Council also decided that all parties and others concerned in the former Yugoslavia, and all military forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina, "shall comply with the provisions of the present resolution, failing which the Council will need to take further measures" under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.

During the meeting, a number of delegations expressed the concern of their Governments over the deterioration of the situation in the former Yugoslavia and emphasized the need for speedy delivery of humanitarian assistance.

At a press conference before the Council meeting, the Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United Nations, Mohamed Sacirbey, read out a statement praising the members of the Council for their "courage and sense of fair play" and "effort to be balanced".

Universally, he went on, the international community "had identified the aggressor and had condemned in the strongest terms the crimes against humanity". Mr. Sacirbey also expressed the determination of his countrymen to "to face the aggressor and even to escort relief".

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The United States today called on the Human Rights Commission, meeting in an Extraordinary Session in Geneva, to appoint a Special Rapporteur to conduct an urgent, first-hand investigation into the allegations of human rights violations in the former Yugoslavia, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Addressing the session today, John R. Bolton, the United States Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs, listed as his Government's objectives in calling for the Session, in addition to the investigation: a full airing of all charges relating to human rights abuses and violations of international law, identification of those responsible and the assurance that humanitarian organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have complete access to all victims of the conflict.

The United States was introducing a resolution to that effect, he said, as "evidence of the uniform repulsion felt throughout the world, and the joint

determination that we cannot remain idle". The speed with which the Commission had convened was further proof of deep concern and commitment.

The Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees, Douglas Stafford, addressing the Session, said the Council "must condemn the reprehensible practice of 'ethnic cleansing' and reaffirm the rights of all minorities to be protected from discrimination, harassment, intimidation, forcible relocation and expulsion, whether en masse or individually".

The Extraordinary Session, requested by the Government of the United States, is the first of its kind in the Commission history. It was convened in accordance with a 1990 provision authorizing such meetings between regular sessions, if a majority of members so agreed.

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The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) dispatched today a humanitarian convoy to the northern Bosnian town of Banja Luka in a move to increase international presence in an area where some 28,000 people are threatened by the policy of "ethnic cleansing". The Agency is boosting its moral presence and visibility around Banja Luka in hopes of stabilizing the situation.

According to a press release issued by the Agency, UNCHR became aware of the new crisis on Monday, when officials from four towns north and northwest of Banja Luka presented the United Nations with letters and petitions from about 28,000 people which listed families "volunteering" to be evacuated from the area to neighbouring Croatia.

UNHCR Workers investigating the situation said they discovered a pattern of brutality against people in the area. People fleeing the area say gangs of irregulars race through the streets at night shooting and report random killings. Before signing the petitions to be "voluntarily evacuated" residents were forced to sign over their land, homes and cars to the local administration.

In addition to increasing its presence on the ground, UNHCR has begun negotiations with relevant authorities and has made it clear that it will hold local officials responsible for the security of these 28,000 people being threatened. UNHCR's Special Envoy in Former Yugoslavia, José Maria Mandiluce, travelled to Belgrade today to discuss the latest crisis with the relevant local authorities. On Wednesday, Mr. Mandiluce conducted similar negotiations with officials in Sarajevo.

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Note: First paragraph of yesterday's highlights should have read:

President George Vassiliou of Cyprus and the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community, H.E. Rauf Denktash, attended this afternoon a joint meeting in New York at the invitation of the Secretary-General.